

# Best Story Challenge



## The Combat EDGE



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# NOCTURNAL Tiger Sharks

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It was a standard moonless night at Bagram Air Base in northern Afghanistan. Those of you who have been there or to similar Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) know exactly what we're talking about. It was dark. How dark you ask?

**Y**ou wouldn't see General Frank if he walked 7 feet in front of you. In fact, you wouldn't have known anyone was there. Marching orders from the Army brass were crystal clear: nighttime operations would be conducted under blacked-out conditions. Consequently, the 70th Fighter Squadron Tiger Sharks faced a dilemma: tell the leadership they could not fly at night due to lack of blacked-out operational training or, tentatively, develop a safe, logically developed Operational Risk Management (ORM) plan to provide the Combined Force Air Component Commander with the A-10's one-of-a-kind strike capability 24 hours a day. That decision was easy. The need wasn't yours; it required a total team effort from the squadron.

## First Things First

The first obstacle facing the Tiger Sharks was the stark fact that no one in the squadron had ever

completed a Night-Vision Goggle (NVG) takeoff or landing. Pilots completed initial ground training consisting of reviewing both the *Flighter NVG Quick-Leave Test Report* and the 177 Test Evaluation Squadron's (TES) *Evaluation of NVG Take, Takeoff, and Landing Operations*. Additionally, the 422 TES provided platform introduction and techniques at Pope AFB immediately prior to the Tiger Sharks' departure to their Area of Responsibility (AOR). Once in theater, the Tiger Sharks handpicked their most experienced NVG Instructor Pilots (IPs) to develop Bagram specific NVG takeoff and landing procedures. Pilots flew their initial night operations Bagram with an NVG IP, utilizing a building block approach: upgrading pilots would fly their first-ever NVG approach to a low approach, then make a full-stop landing on their second attempt. After several weeks of training, the

entire squadron became NVG takeoff and landing capable.

## Blacked-Out Environment

Bagram nighttime operations forced the Tiger Sharks to face numerous wartime challenges never experienced in day-to-day training. For instance, prior to the pilot's arrival, maintenance troops, weapons loaders, and crew chiefs had to prepare the A-10s using illumination from only blue chain-sticks and red-lensed miniature flashlights. Accustomed to working under massive "football stadium" floodlights at Pope, crews quickly and safely adapted their procedures to the unfriendly nighttime environment. The penetration of Foreign Object Damage (FOD) became a huge priority. Items that were normally double-checked on a daily basis were now triple-or



**Blackout operations require a total team effort ...**





# Nocturnal Tiger Sharks

- Operational
  - Enduring Freedom
  - Deployed Operation
  - Timely





# Nocturnal Tiger Sharks

- Covers All Aspects of Safety
  - Ground
  - Weapons
  - Flight



# Nocturnal Tiger Sharks

- Photography
  - Matches Story
  - Good Quality



# Nocturnal Tiger Sharks

- Didn't have to beg to get it

The Combat  
**EDGE**

**Where the few do more with less!**  
**(No Budget, No Support, No Problem!)**

